

Message Text

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 502

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

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USINT CAIRO

AMEMBASSY BONN

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USMISSION UN NY

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEL AVIV 9162

E.O. 11652 GDS

HAGS: PINT, PFOR, IS

SUBJ: ISRAELI LEADERS' ACRIMONY OVER WAR ISSUES

SUMMARY. ISRAELI

WAR POLITICIANS AND GENERALS HAVE BEGUN

SQUABBLING IN PUBLIC ABOUT WHO IS TO BE HELD ACCOUNTABLE FOR

SHORTCOMINGS IN POLITICAL AND MILITARY CONDUCT OF RECENT

WAR. ALTHOUGH MOST OF LABOR ALIGNMENT LEADERSHIP IS

REFRAINING FROM DIRECT PERSONAL ATTACKS ON EACH MLHER, OLD

RIVALRIES ARE BEING FANNED BY NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL PRESS.

SPARKS OF ACRIMONY

AND CONTROVERSY SEEM INEVITABLE GIVEN

CONJUNCTURE OF NATIONAL ELECTIONS AND SWEEPING RE-EXAMINATION

OF INGRAINED POLITICAL AND MILITARY ASSUMPTIONS. IN VIEW OF

CRUCIAL DECISIONS WHICH LIE AHEAD, IT IS PROBABLY NECESSARY

AND HEALTHY PREREQUISITE FOR ISRAELIS TO TRY TO ASSESS ERRORS

OF THE PAST. IN OUR VIEW, CURRENT POLEMICS ARE SIGN THAT POLITICAL

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LIFE IS FAST RETURNING TO NORMAL RATHER THAN PORTENT OF ANY CRISIS

OF CONFIDENCE. END SUMMARY.

1. IN WAKE OF " YOM KIPPUR WAR" AND SILENCING OF GUNS, ISRAELI

POLITICAL LIFE HAS BEGUN TO RETURN TO NORMAL, AS POLITICIANS AND GENERALS SQUABBLE OVER HOW AND ON WHOM TO ASSIGN RESPONSIBILITY FOR SHORTCOMINGS IN POLITICAL AND MILITARY CONDUCT OF WAR. FROM PRIME MINISTER ON DOWN, ISRAELIS AGREE THAT AN INQUIRY UNDER EITHER PARLIAMENTARY OR JUDICIAL AUSPICES TO INVESTIGATE WHAT WENT WRONG BEFORE AND DURING WAR MUST BE CONDUCTED AT AN EARLY DATE, AND ARMY WILL CARRY OUT ITS OWN INVESTIGATION STARTING THIS WEEK. YET, EVEN BEFORE VARIOUS COMMISSIONS HAVE BEEN ESTABLISHED SNIPING HAS BEGUN WITHIN LABOR LEADERSHIP AND IN

ADDITION TWO OF ISRAEL'S TOP GENERALS HAVE GIVEN CONTROVERSIAL INTERVIEWS TO INTERNATIONAL AND NATIONAL PRESS.

2. DESPITE POLITICAL EXIGENCIES OF UPCOMING ELECTION, LONGSTANDING PERSONAL RIVALRIES WITHIN THE ALIGNMENT LEADERSHIP THREATEN TO EMERGE INTO OPEN IN WEEKS AHEAD. PRINCIPALS SO FAR HAVE

GENERALLY REFRAINED FROM EXPLICIT ATTACKS ON EACH OTHER IN PUBLIC WITH NOTABLE EXCEPTIONS OF HISTADRUT LEADER BEN-AHARON'S SEARING BLAST AGAINST HIS LABOR COLLEAGUES' CONDUCT OF THE WAR AND EBAN'S MORE MEASURED STATEMENT, BOTH COMPOUNDING SIN BY VOICING THEIR VIEWS WHILE OUT OF THE COUNTRY. BUT PRESS REPORTS SUGGEST THAT ACIMONY IS MOUNTING BENEATH SURFACE PARTICULARLY AS REGARDS MEIR-EBAN AND DAYAN-EBAN RELATIONSHIPS. TODAY'S HAARETZ ALLEGES THAT MRS MEIR, WHO HAS NEVER BEEN AN ARDENT EBAN ADMIRER, IS MORE DISILLUSIONED THAN EVER WITH HIM; SHE

ALLEGEDLY BELIEVES THAT HIS OVER-OPTIMISTIC PREWAR ASSESSMENTS FAILED TO PREPARE HER OR THE CABINET ADEQUATELY FOR ANTI-ISRAELI REACTIONS IN EUROPE AND AFRICA. DAYAN SUPPORTERS ALSO HAVE CALLED ATTENTION TO ISRAEL'S DIPLOMATIC SETBACKS. FOR HIS PART EBAN, UPON LEAVING FOR US THIS WEEKEND, EXPRESSED DOUBTS TO REPORTERS ABOUT SOME OF DAYAN'S STRATEGIC AND POLITICAL ASSESSMENTS.

3. AMONG ISRAEL'S MILITARY LEADERS AS WELL, CONTROVERSY HAS
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FLARED UP WITH PUBLICATION BY NEW YORK TIMES OF INTERVIEWS WITH GENERAL ARIEL SHARON AND GENERAL (AND MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY) HAIM BAR-LEV IN WHICH BOTH MEN HAVE RAISED QUESTIONS REGARDING IDF LEADERSHIP'S JUDGMENT, PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCE AND OPERATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS. SHARON HAS ALLEGED THAT IDF LEADERSHIP, BY FAILING TO APPRECIATE STRATEGIC SIGNIFICANCE OF CROSSING TO WEST BANK OF SUEZ CANAL IN TIME, LOST CHANCE OF ATTAINING DECISIVE VICTORY. BAR-LEV AS WELL AS

CRITICIZING ARMY'S LACK OF PREPAREDNESS, HAS QUESTIONED
JUDGMENT OF ISRAEL'S CIVILIAN LEADERSHI IN PASSIVELY ACCEPTING

INCORRECT INTELLIGENCE ASSESSMENTS IN DAYS PRECEDING OUTBREAK
OF HOSTILITIES.

4. CHIEF OF STAFF ELAZAR, CLEARLY STUNG BY THESE ATTACKS, HAS
LAUNCHED COUNTERATTACK AGAINST HIS CRITICS. WHILE REFUSING TO
DISCUSS IN PUBLIC SUBSTANCE OF ACCUSATIONS LEVELLED AGAINST
HIMSELF AND IDF LEADERSHIP IN AN OSTENSIBLE EFFORT TO STOP FURTHER
POLITICIZATION OF THE DEBATE, ELAZAR NOTETHELESS HAS CONTRIBUTED
TO STATE OF TENSION BY CHARACTERIZING INTERVIEWS AS " BIASED AND
ONE-SIDED", AND DESIGNED TO ENHANCE PERSONAL REPUTATIONS RATHER
THAN ARRIVE AT THE TRUTH. AFTER CONSULTATIONS WITH DAYAN, HE HAS

ASKED ATTORNEY GENERAL TO DETERMINE WHAT MEASURES CAN
BE TAKEN AGAINST SHARON FOR HIS BREACH OF DISCIPLINE.

5. COMMENT. COJUNCTURE OF NATIONAL ELECTIONS WITH SWEEPING
RE-EXAMINATION OF DEEPLY HELD POLITICAL AND MILITARY ASSUMP-
TIONS RELATING TO ISRAEL'S ABILITY TO CONTROL ITS OWN DESTINY IS
GUARANTEED TO PRODUCE SPARKS OF ACRIMONY AND CONTROVERSY.
SURFACING OF DIFFERENCES WITHIN LABOR LEADERSHIP IS AN INDEX THAT
POLITICAL LIFE IS COMING BACK TO NORMAL; GIVEN IMPORTANCE
OF DECISIONS WHICH WILL CONFRONT LABOR LEADERSHIP IN MONTHS
AHEAD, IT IS PROBABLY HEALTHY AND NECESSARY PREREQUISITE
THAT MISTAKES OF PAST BE THRASHED OUT IN OPEN. WHATEVER LABOR
PARTY'S POST-ELECTORAL COMPOSITION MAY TURN OUT TO BE, WE
BELIEVE THAT LABOR'S ENERGETIC MACHINE WILL DO ITS BEST TO
TURN ADVERSITY INTO ADVANTAGE, STRESSING DEMOCRATIC AND
HETEROGENEOUS NATURE OF LABOR ALIGNMENT. IN ANY CASE
" THE WAR OF THE JEWS" DO NOT SEEM TO PORTEND ANY CRISIS
OF CONFIDENCE WHICH COULD TEAR GOVT. APART BEFORE ELECTIONS.
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